



FACUTADE DE FILOLOXÍA

Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas

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# The Role of London in the Emergence of Standard and Non-standard Varieties

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Traballo de fin de grao

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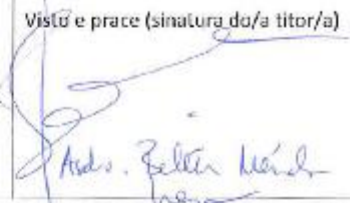

**Título:** *The role of London in the emergence of standard and non-standard varieties*

The present study discusses the role of the city of London, its history and its society, in the emergence of standard and non-standard varieties of English. The importance of London derives from the fact that this city is and has been, an important centre of migration. Migration brings about interdialectal and interlinguistic contact, as well as phenomena such as dialect levelling, or the introduction of linguistic features from other dialects/languages, which may eventually lead to the emergence of new varieties.

The dissertation will present an overview of the emerging varieties in London at different stages in history. Firstly I will examine the formation of the standard variety, which originates in the late Middle English period; and secondly I will analyse the main features of two non-standard forms of British English (spoken mainly in the city of London): Cockney (emerging in the Modern English period) and the currently developing Multicultural London English (MLE).

The methodology followed in this paper combines a more theoretical approach based on the literature on the subject; and a more practical approach by which I will illustrate the different features of the three varieties under study in various materials (e.g. historical texts, for the emerging written standard; TV shows, movies or corpora material, in the case of Cockney and MLE).

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SRA. DI CANA DA FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA (Presidente da Comisión de Títulos de Grao)

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

This study focuses on three varieties of English emerging in London, namely Standard English, Cockney and Multicultural London English, and explores the role the history and society of London played in their development. Therefore, it provides an overview of the involvement of London both in the conformation of the standard variety and in the emergence of non-standard varieties associated with the British capital.

To achieve this global vision, I resort to the sociolinguistic perspective. Sociolinguistics is the discipline that studies language in relation to society. In fact, society is a decisive factor for the study of any language and perhaps we, the speakers themselves, are not aware of it. What is the difference between a language and a dialect? Why is it better to talk about variety so as not to enter any kind of conflict? The answer to the first question is more complicated than it seems. You cannot make a differentiation between language and dialect based only on a linguistic study of its characteristics, other extralinguistic factors linked to society (politics, social prejudices, etc.) acquire great power to determine when a variety becomes a language or a dialect. In the same way, I also opted for an approach within historical sociolinguistics in order to observe the different changes that the English language underwent over time (Romaine 2000:1-2; 135-144) (Hudson 1996:20-32).

I have always been interested in knowing and understanding the culture, history and society that a language carries within itself. But it was not until I took the subject Varieties of English (optional subject; 3<sup>rd</sup> year) that this interest in knowing more about non-standard varieties of English awoke in me. There is usually a lot of information about the Standard and how it was formed but many people are unaware of the existence of non-standard varieties or they simply consider those varieties as poor English. In addition, I think it is very important to observe and study the different varieties from a sociolinguistic

perspective as a way of getting rid of prejudices that people may have towards any language. For this reason, due to the lack of information and the belief that the comprehension of the factors that had an impact in the path of a language are vital for the acceptance of the varieties formed of that language, I decided to investigate and present a brief study on the impact that the city of London, its society and its history, had on Standard English and on two non-standard varieties.

The dissertation is divided into six different chapters, the first one being this introduction and Chapter 6 the conclusion. Each chapter deals with a different topic, Chapter 2 presents a historical background in order to acquaint the reader with the city of London. In this chapter I also offer a linguistic background to introduce the many terms that are used throughout the dissertation to refer to different linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of a language. Chapter 3 deals with the conformation of Standard English, both written (3.2) and spoken (3.3). Chapters 4 and 5 focus on two non-standard varieties of English born in the heart of the city of London, the East End. Both chapters include a contextualization of the linguistic and historical situations in which each variety emerged, its evolution, the attitudes of the rest of the population towards that variety and its linguistic characteristics. Moreover, audio-visual media is used for their exemplification, as well as written material.

## CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUD

In this chapter I introduce some necessary background for the study of the linguistic varieties developing in London. Firstly, I provide a cursory view to the history of London as a multicultural city (2.1), while in section 2.2 I introduce some basic linguistic concepts which are key to the understanding of these varieties.

### 2.1 A BRIEF JOURNEY THROUGH THE HISTORY OF LONDON

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, London is the formal capital city of both England and the United Kingdom and it is considered a global city particularly famous for its multiculturalism. The city, however, has a very long history.

The first account of the history of this city is found in Roman times, when Romans settled down in Britain in 43 AD. It was at that time that the city of London was founded, under the name of *Londinium*. Already in those days the growth of the city started to take place: the Romans introduced a system of roads, which connected London/*Londinium* with the different areas of the country, and built a bridge in the area of the present London Bridge, which would serve as an important attraction point for new settlers years later. The Roman occupation lasted for three hundred years, in which London increased its importance. In 410 AD, the Roman soldiers withdrew from Britain to defend the city of Rome which was under the attack of Visigoths, Vandals and Huns (i.e. the Barbarians), and the Roman troops left Britain unprotected, which facilitated the invasion of the Germanic tribes, the Anglo-Saxons.

The term Anglo-Saxons is used to refer to the Germanic tribes from the Danish mainland and islands (Angles), north-west Germany (Saxons) and northern Denmark (Jutes) that came to Britain in the invasions of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. As time went by, the invaders organised themselves in seven different kingdoms combining tribes to gain

power or as the result of submission under the rule of a stronger leader. Those small kingdoms were known as the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy which was formed by: Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, Kent, Essex, Sussex, and Wessex (Baugh & Cable 2002:44).

After the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons, *Londinium* came to be known as *Lundenwic* and it was acknowledged as an important city which was under the command of the different kings of Kent, Mercia or Wessex according to different periods in history. The city enjoyed an advantageous position due to its location, because it was situated in a region where the boundaries of the kingdoms of Wessex, Mercia and East Anglia converged, and it was also located near the trading settlement that was established in the 640s west of the city walls (where the Strand and Charing Cross are located in the present day). By the 920s the city had become a centre of commerce and international trade of great importance in England. In the same manner, it became a political focus and a place of industry. Moreover, besides being the site in which Royal Councils were held, London also had its own government, and as Hibbert states (1997:7):

This display of [...] proud independence was characteristic of the kind of individuality London had already created for herself in the first five hundred years of her history. As in Roman times, when Londinium had been neither a tribal capital [...] nor a *colonia* [...], so in early Saxon times, London stood outside and aloof from the organisation and legal system of the country as a whole.

During the reign of the penultimate Anglo-Saxon king of England, Edward the Confessor, the king built his palace at Westminster and this increased the importance of London, as the royal courts of justice and the exchequer met there. Moreover, the decision to build his palace in Westminster brought the parliaments regularly meetings to the chapter house of the Abbey and later on to St. Stephen's Chapel at the palace.



English history is said to have entered a new era when the Normans arrived in Britain in 1066. William the Conqueror, also known as William Duke of Normandy, was the victor in the battle of Hastings. This battle was the one held in October of that same year by the French and English (at the time known as Anglo-Saxons), who fought against each other disputing the rule of the country. After his victory, William became the first Norman king of England and one of England's most influential monarchs. This meant the beginning of a new reign, and after conquering England he granted to London rights that were equal to those of the counties and which had validity even exceeding their physical limits.

Later on, during the reign of Richard Lionheart, which lasted from 1189 to 1199, the city acquired even more self-determination becoming the first municipal corporation in England. But even though London's importance regarding commerce was evident, and it had won the title of main city of England, it was not the political capital.

The limits of the city were established as those we find in present day London and the population amounted to thirty-thousand people. The importance of the London harbour on the River Thames became visible during these years when its coastline was extended to the south and many merchants settled in the city like the Germans (although they were later expelled), the Gascons, the Flemings and the northern Italians, who evicted the Jews as bankers, the latter leaving the city and not returning until 1656.

The population of London reached approximately eighty thousand inhabitants during 1300, but the Black Death claimed around ten thousand lives, disrupting in that manner the urban life of the city and leaving as a result a slow process of recovery. The guilds (around one hundred of them by the year 1400) gained power by using money to buy privileges and freedom for monarchs who had economical needs and thus they

distanced themselves from the intrusion of the monarchy and they propitiated their own self-government.

The 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries were periods of great mobility within the British island. People from different areas of the country moved to the region of what was known as Midlands, which corresponds to the central area of Britain. They were attracted by the economic and commercial activity which was taking place there and also many young people travelled to study at the universities which were established in Oxford and Cambridge.

In general terms, the 15<sup>th</sup> century in all England was considered a period of splendour for the worker. The vast majority of economic activities were still related to the agrarian system but there was also development in the industry. The city of London continued with its growth and with its marked dominance in the southwest of the country.

Furthermore, the city had been recognised as the capital of England and until the end of the Middle Ages its wealth, fame and importance did not stop growing and became a city “as full of splendour as of vigorous life and wonderful variety” (Hibbert 1997: 23).

In 1588 London experienced an increase in its population which was in accordance with the period of prosperity that the whole country was living. In this century, monopolies had been established in the city and, in addition, there were numerous guilds which pointed out the great development of the capital's commerce.

Of the almost eighty thousand inhabitants in 1300, during the 1700s we find the figure of five hundred thousand Londoners. The construction of several bridges on the River Thames led to and increased the expansion around the docks. Moreover, by 1800 the population surpassed the figure of one million inhabitants. The 18<sup>th</sup> century meant the

recognition of the city as the world's economic capital (until its later replacement by Amsterdam) as well as the commercial and financial social centre of England.

There was an important event in the 19<sup>th</sup>C that gave Londoners prosperity and confidence, and that was the achievement of naval supremacy in Europe, which was attained after the victory in the Battle of Trafalgar (1805). There was a transformation of the social and business life of the city when a large-scale public railway was constructed; helping London to be connected to many of the other major cities. The naval supremacy achieved in this century helped the British Empire with its expansion which had already started in 1793, with the annexation of twenty colonies from different parts of the world by 1815. Many of these colonies were governed through the city of London.

From the 19<sup>th</sup> century, larger migrations towards London began, among them the Jews and the Irish (Block 2006: 47), and after the Second World War, people from the Caribbean and Africa arrived to the city.

As a consequence of the process of expansion of the British Empire, a migration that would greatly unleash the multiculturalism that is experienced today in the city is fostered, and London became the centre of the Empire. The capital was described in McLeod's words as:

[A] cosmopolitan [city] of the 1910s and 1920s in which elites from different colonial contexts were able to mingle and exchange opinions in clubs, salons, and debating halls- in effect to experience different forms of cultural and political self-representation (2004:5).

After many British colonies became independent the Commonwealth was created. This is an association of the United Kingdom, dependencies and former colonies. This meant that although these territories had independence they were still somehow linked to the former metropolis. That is why during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> C a great migratory

movement is observed from many of these countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the Caribbean, etc. towards the British island.

In the last part of that same century, we still find a strong migratory movement and many people from all over the world came to London. The city's cosmopolitanism is very well-known. We can find representatives of several cultures that have influenced the city and its citizens like those of Japan, India, China, Thailand, Africa and more. However, we cannot say that this influx of migration is the first that suffered the English capital because since the birth of this city it has been subjected to different migrations, the Romans being the first immigrants, followed by the Anglo-Saxons and the Normans. Because, even though they were invasions, we could also consider them as a peculiar type of migration (Block 2006:45). The status of London as a cosmopolitan city was also discussed in an article written by Ghosh Pallab, a science correspondence, for BBC News in 2015. While interviewing Carolina McDonald (curator of the Museum of London) they came to the conclusion that from the moment the city was created by the Romans it was already cosmopolitan. In C. McDonald's words:

The thing to remember with the original Londoners is that they were not born here. Every first-generation Londoner was from somewhere else- whether it was somewhere else in Britain, somewhere else on the continent, somewhere else in the Mediterranean, somewhere else from Africa [...].

To conclude with this first part, after a brief review of the history of the British capital we can see that there is a great ethnic and cultural variety. This implies not only the union and coexistence of different cultural traditions but also of their languages, which in contact with English, will have great relevance for the development and evolution of the latter.

## 2.2 SOME BASIC LINGUISTIC CONCEPTS

It is important to introduce some basic notions related to language and linguistic variation. To start with, we should acknowledge that there is not a single form of a language, but rather different varieties of the same language. The term variety refers to a linguistic code that finds itself under the influence of situational variables. And these variables may be related to differences of a regional or social nature (sex, age, occupation) (Crystal 2008:509). Furthermore, the different varieties can be referred to as dialects, which is the term used to designate a “regionally or socially distinctive variety of language, identified by a particular set of words and grammatical structures” (Crystal 2008:142), exhibiting differences in relation to pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, or substandard (no longer used), when referring to the “[l]inguistic forms or dialects which do not conform to [the] norm” (Crystal 2008:450). But these terms carry negative connotations, as if those varieties were not as good enough or they were inferior to the standard language, i.e. “[the] prestige variety of language used within a speech community” (Crystal 2008:450). As Preston (2002:40) states, “attitudes towards languages and their varieties seem to be tied to attitudes towards groups of people”. This is the reason why, in order to avoid any type of misunderstanding when talking about languages or the varieties which do not correspond with the standard, the term used to refer to them is non-standard varieties.

As already mentioned, the standard dialect is the prestigious form of the language chosen to be used for language teaching, mass media, administration, etc. (high functions) and which is not associated with a particular place (supra-regional) (Crystal 2008:450). The process of standardization is known as a process which eliminates variation within a language or also as the process by which a particular variety of a language is chosen to be elaborated and codified as “the norm” (Hope 2000:51). This process has different phases: i) selection, ii) acceptance, iii) elaboration, iv) codification. To understand it

better, it is necessary to develop the different stages a little. In the first one, which corresponds with selection, what happens is that one of the existing varieties (dialects), or different characteristics of several dialects, are chosen as the norm. The reasons for these choices are not always linguistic but may also be related to political concerns or social prestige of the different varieties. Next, what is sought is the approval of this new variety by the educated people, like writers, politicians, etc. which constitutes the second stage. The following step is that of elaboration and it consists in the development of the different functions that the standard variety will be used for e.g. administration, education, etc. And finally, the standard must be fixed. This is known as codification stage, where grammars and dictionaries are created (Leith 1983:32).

Hope (2000:51-52) differentiates two terms of relevance for this matter: prescriptivism and standardization, and the relationship that there is between them. It is possible to believe that prescriptivism goes hand in hand with standardization but in reality, this is not necessarily true. This association is related to the fact that during the standardization process the codification phase is based on the suppression and impossibility of changes or variations in the language. For this reason, prescriptivism plays an important role as the ideology of the language that advocates correction and the employment of rules for the use of a language. In this way, people try to maintain a "pure" standard and criticize any change or "incorrect" use of the language (Crystal 2008:384). In addition, as indicated by Baron (2002), the English prescriptivism served for certain social classes (as merchants or gentlemen) of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a weapon to differentiate themselves from the lower classes and establish their worth or prestige through language. So, even though there is a relationship between prescriptivism and standardization, in the case of English this relation is not as close as it might seem. In fact, the beginning of the standardization of English happened when there were still no currents of prescriptivism

in England related to the language. Therefore, prescriptivism is conceived as an ideological or cultural phenomenon instead of a linguistic one. However, standardization is a process related to language, an internal process that occurs as a change from below, meaning below the level of awareness of the speakers.

Nevertheless, even though the process of standardization is established as a language-internal phenomenon as compared with prescriptivism, the establishment of a standard variety is closely related to other areas outside the language itself, such as the politics of the country in which that particular language is spoken. As Milroy (2000:15) indicates, Standard English, or the process of standardization of English to be precise, is related to the nationalism that arose in certain northern states of Europe, from which derived an ideological current that used the language of the nation as a symbol of union and national pride. Furthermore, in the case of English, another important ideological movement that helped to promote this language was the desire to establish the English language as the language of the great British Empire (Milroy 2000:16). In Crowley's words (2003:63):

The superiority of the English language was not only used to delineate the superiority of its speakers in relation to other national groups but was also to be used in cultural and political debates within Britain to argue for social unity.

In summary, despite talking about linguistic elements, it can be seen that it is very complicated to establish a clear boundary between a language and the history and culture of its community of speakers. Moreover, one of the reasons why many of the decisions that are made regarding the improvement (or impoverishment) of a language derive from external factors (political, social, etc.) is the impossibility of disjoin those non-linguistic aspects from a language. So, the conclusion is that such factors are of vital importance

for the development of a language, as we will see in the next chapter, and they are also decisive in many cases when speaking about the prosperity or death of a language.



## **CHAPTER 3: STANDARD DIALECT BASED ON LONDON ENGLISH.**

The aim of this chapter is to see the role played by the city of London and its dialect in the emergence of Standard English.

Many times, when studying the history of a language, the standard variety is what stands out the most or from what more information is obtained. In the case of English, one can also study in more detail the process of developing the Modern Standard English rather than studying in depth its many other varieties (Milroy 2000:11).

To understand how the standard of Modern English was created, I believe that it is necessary to make an approximation to the history of this variety from the beginning, since the different periods influenced and guided the development of English in different ways and each of them had its relevance in the process.

### **3.1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The history of the English language has been divided into three different periods which are Old English (OE) (450-1150), Middle English (ME) (1150-1500) and Modern English (ModE) (1500-1900).

In the Old English period, there was not a homogeneous language and it was possible to distinguish four different dialects: Kentish, Northumbrian, West Saxon and Mercian. These varieties can be the product of social or regional factors, among others, and in this case the dialects that concern us are those that emerge due to the geographical distribution of the different people who came to Britain from different parts of Europe (Freeborn 1998:35). Therefore, we come across dialects that established their limits to a large extent according to the political boundaries that existed at that time. And at that time, the one that had most prestige was West Saxon, which, in fact, is the only one from which a wide written record was kept. -This is the reason why it was the one chosen by

scholars to study the form and grammar of Old English. - Besides, already in that early stage of the development of English a standard language, which had this dialect as its basis, was beginning to appear. But in the end this standard could not prosper, mainly due to the Norman Conquest, and it would not be until years later that another dialect would gain prestige and importance and become the basis for the new English Standard (East Midlands) (Baugh & Cable 2002:47).

An important event that occurs during this time in the history of English is the Christianization of the British island (from the year 600 onwards). This implies the introduction of Latin into the lives of English speakers. Although the inhabitants of Britain had been in contact with Latin before, with the presence of the Romans, their contact had not had the extent that occurred at this stage. Besides, with the introduction of Latin came the Roman alphabet which replaced the runic alphabet present to this time. In the same manner, Latin established itself as a language for religious functions and religious texts (von Mengden 2012:23).

Furthermore, as a matter of fact, it is in the Old English period that the English language faces the Scandinavian invasion and the Norman Conquest, which implied two different language contact situations between the languages of the invaders and the people living in the British island. In the first invasion, both languages Old English and Old Norse (ON) (this term was used to refer to the different Scandinavian languages and dialects spoken by the Vikings) were similar since they were both cognates (i.e. they came from the same Germanic language) and people could understand each other to some extent (Freeborn 1998:46). That affirmation was applied for people living the same area, because there were more visible differences between the North and South, as the North area was more deeply influenced by Old Norse, and people claimed to barely understand each other. Furthermore, both OE and ON were at the same level, that is, they were used

in the same linguistic situations indistinctly. The case of French was different, because along with the Norman Conquest there also came a new social system in which French became the language spoken by the upper classes and the one used in administration and education while English remained as the language used by the people from the lower classes. So, in this sense there was a situation of diglossia, i.e. “situation where two very different varieties of a language co-occur throughout a speech community, each with a distinct range of social function” (Crystal 2008:145). Normally, when a situation like this takes place, we also talk about bilingualism, but it is important to distinguish between these two terms. Bilingualism is the “degree of proficiency people must achieve before they qualify as bilingual (whether comparable to a monolingual native-speaker, or something less than this, even to the extent of minimal knowledge of a second language)” (Crystal 2008:53). In other words, when talking about bilingualism we refer to the fact that people use two languages in the same community of speakers, and they have a similar linguistic competence in both. In this case, regarding English and French, what had arisen was a situation of diglossia without bilingualism. According to Fishman (1967:33) diglossia without bilingualism arises when “two or more speech communities are united religiously, politically or economically into a single functioning unit notwithstanding the socio-cultural cleavages that separate them”. The French language entered the British Island when their nobility was introduced to England and banished the English nobles. In this way, there was a highly marked differentiation between the different social positions and there was not a close contact between the two languages. Instead, both English and French were used for totally different functions by the different social groups, since for example the French were not interested in learning or speaking English. In addition, an important reason why we do not speak of a standard in the period following the Norman

invasion is that the functions for which the standard variety is normally used (administration, education, etc.) were covered by French.

The Middle English period was by far the largest in which dialectal variety could be appreciated in the British Island, both orally and in writing.

Up to this moment, as previously introduced, the West Saxon dialect had become the standard language of writing (orthography) in the 11<sup>th</sup> century across all the dialectal areas, having as a result a code which did not reflect the pronunciation of its speakers (Freeborn 1998:77). But this changed later, and according to Crowley (2003), this division of Britain into so many different dialectal areas would be the result of the Norman Conquest. This was the event that put an end to the standard language that there was at that moment and it led to a “linguistic ‘anarchy’ [which] prevailed [...] [and] there was no acknowledged standard of national speech; ever since 1120 each shire had spoken [what] was right in its own eyes” (2003:84). There was no standard and for this reason people wrote reflecting the way they spoke (their pronunciation). The degree of diversity was such that it is difficult to establish dialect divisions as in a dialectal map, but it is possible to distinguish four main dialectal areas: Northern, East Midland, West Midland, and Southern (Baugh & Cable 2002:175-76). Although in the beginning of the ME period there were actually five different dialects, since the ones from OE still remained (Northern, Kentish, Midland and Southern) but they became five later on when there were enough differences between the East and West of the variety spoken in the Midlands and so that dialect split into two different ones (Freeborn 1998:163). Nevertheless, Kentish became almost indistinct from the Southern dialect (West Saxon) years later and so they “merged”; that’s why we just talk about four different dialects.

During the Middle English period, there was a change in the geographical and social distribution of the languages that were used on the island, as well as a change in

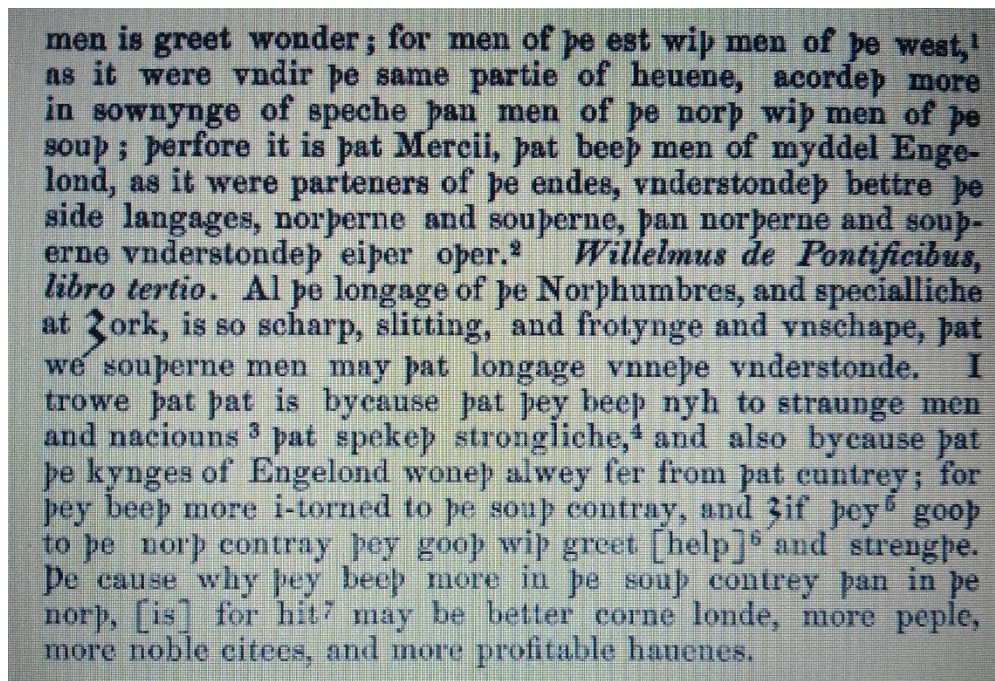
the different functions that they performed and in their status. In an initial stage one could appreciate that both Latin and French were the most prestigious languages and those used for political, administrative and religious spheres. English was thus relegated to be the language used by the uneducated people (Schendl 2012:507).

However, after the English lost power against French and Latin it is possible to observe that England was still more multicultural than previous years and in the 13<sup>th</sup> century people began to seek a unity, a sense of nation (Keene 2000:93). The national feeling that was emerging was also linked to the rejection of the foreigner and to a national pride on the part of the English. The progress of the English language was also visible as it began to be increasingly used by the nobility while French began to be treated as a foreign language (Baugh & Cable 2002:121- 125). For this reason, it can be said that for the creation of a standard variety many extralinguistic factors take part and as Keene (2000:93) expresses, “[i]n Britain, perhaps more than anywhere else, elements from a carefully constructed history of the nation have been and are being, used to explain the evolution of the language itself”.

London is in fact the city that plays a most important role in this process. It was the capital city, as we have already seen, and therefore, it was also the city where more diversity and multiculturalism could be appreciated, with the coexistence of different dialects of English, and different languages. The outcome of this linguistic situation in which so many different languages and dialects were in contact, was the emergence of varieties that would later be influential when creating the standard (Keene 2000:93-94). Moreover, a crucial point in the emergence of the standard for researchers is the fact that the city of London was a focus in which a great variety of people and cultures were connected. And it was not only because of the city but the commercial activity that allowed the communication and contact of the Londoners with the rest of the people of

the neighbouring counties (Keene 2000:108). Actually, the 13<sup>th</sup> century was especially important since it was a time of great migrations from the Northern and Eastern parts of the island towards the capital city.

Once the period of obscurity after the Norman conquest was over, the English language began to undergo a revitalization in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Fisher 1996:17). As mentioned above, the relationship between nationalism, which had already started in the previous century, and the search for a standard are closely connected because the search for independence and differentiation of the English population from the French had a great and positive influence on the recovery of the English language. But we can observe that it was not only a differentiation from the foreigner languages that had started to take place in the British island but there was also fragmentation within the language itself, as a result of geographical differences. There are texts such as Ranulph Hidgen's *Polychronicon* (1387) in which we can see attitudes of the speakers towards the other varieties spoken in Britain:



men is greet wonder; for men of þe est wiþ men of þe west,<sup>1</sup>  
as it were vndir þe same partie of heuene, acordeþ more  
in sownynge of speche þan men of þe norþ wiþ men of þe  
sowþ; þerfore it is þat Mercii, þat beþ men of myddel Eng-  
lond, as it were parteners of þe endes, vnderstondeþ bettre þe  
side langages, norþerne and souþerne, þan norþerne and souþ-  
erne vnderstondeþ eiper oper.<sup>2</sup> *Willelmus de Pontificibus,*  
*libro tertio.* Al þe longage of þe Norþumbres, and specialliche  
at **Z**ork, is so scharp, slitting, and frotyng and vnschape, þat  
we souþerne men may þat longage vnneþe vnderstonde. I  
trowe þat þat is bycause þat þey beþ nyh to straunge men  
and naciouns<sup>3</sup> þat spekeþ strongliche,<sup>4</sup> and also bycause þat  
þe kynges of Engeland woneþ alwey fer from þat cuntrey; for  
þey beþ more i-torned to þe sowþ contray, and ȝif þey<sup>6</sup> goop  
to þe norþ contray þey goop wiþ greet [help]<sup>6</sup> and strengþe.  
þe cause why þey beþ more in þe sowþ contrey þan in þe  
norþ, [is] for hit<sup>7</sup> may be better corne londe, more peple,  
more noble citees, and more profitable haueues.

Figure 1. POLYCHRONICON TEXT EXTRACT (Babington 2012:163)

[...] for men of the east with men of the west, as it were under the same part of heaven concord more in pronunciation than men of the north with men of the south; therefore it is the Mercians, that are men of middle England, as it were partners of the ends, understood better the side languages, northern and southern than northern and southern understand each other. All the language of the Northumbrians, and specially at York is so sharp, cuffing and grating and unshaped, that we southern men may hardly understand that language. I believe that that is because they are near to strange men and foreigners that speak strangely, and also because that the kings of England dwell always far from that land; for they are more turned to the south land, and if they go to the north land they go with great help and strength. The cause why they are more in the south country than in the north [is] for it may be better corn land, more people, more noble cities, and more profitable heavens. Translation into Modern English.

The *Polycricon* is a long chronicle divided into seven books each of which narrate a summary of the history of Britain. By reading this fragment, it can be deduced that the speakers began to be aware of the differences that existed in writing and pronunciation and not just that, but they also began to associate certain varieties with the idea of prestige. In this way, rivalry along with prejudices towards the different varieties started rising. The dialect spoken in the North was strongly influenced by the Old Norse due to the fact that this territory was part of the Danelaw i.e. “[...] the northern, central and eastern region of Anglo-Saxon England colonized by invading Danish armies in the late 9th century” (Holman 2001:1). The central area (Midland) was seen, as expressed in that text, as a compromise zone in which the dialects of the north and south converged. On the other hand, the south, being the place where the king and the nobles settled the court, it was believed to be the place in which the exemplary dialect and the one that should be taken as reference for an adequate language was spoken.

In the Middle English period, Henry V, king of England from 1413 to 1422, was an important figure in the recovery and impulse of English. This monarch led to the victory of the English troops in Agincourt (a battle that took place during the Hundred Years War) against the French and this fact further impelled the incipient nationalism of that time. It was this king also the one who used the English language in his correspondence and official statements (unlike in the past, which were all written in French). In addition, the guilds, which previously used Latin to teach their apprentices and also to keep their records, changed to the use of English (Fisher 1996:22-23). For these reasons Fisher explains that “Henry V’s use of English marks the turning point in establishing English as the national language of England [...] and the Chancery dialect [...] became the prestige written language” (1996:22-23).

In this quotation Fisher refers to Chancery dialect, and this is indeed very important. When speaking of the Chancery, it must be taken into account that we are talking about an organization that was in charge of distributing the writings of the king, which is the reason why the language they used (Chancery English or Chancery dialect) ended up acquiring an official status. When a society is established, it is also important that it establishes the language that will represent it and that is what happened during the 14<sup>th</sup> century with English. In this way one could speak of a “first written standard” (Fisher 1996:36-39).

Fisher (1996:62) indicates that some historians, such as Wyld, identify Chancery English as an evolution of the spoken English in London, but he points out that there were differences between the two. Therefore, it is not clear whether both have a common origin or not, but something that we can assert is that they were both of great influence for the creation of Modern English. In fact, thanks to Caxton's printing press, much of what was produced was largely influenced by Chancery English, since it was the language of the



official powers. But sometime later it was observed that the texts that were being printed contained characteristics belonging to the variety of London. Consequently, Modern English cannot be identified with Chancery English, but the latter established the basis for the evolution of the modern standard at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Fisher 1996:64). Some characteristics of this first standard are:

#### Orthography

- The abandonment of the <e> in words that do not carry it in modern English like *oure* transforms into *our* and *whiche* transforms into *wich*.
- The change of *seid* by *saide* and *hadd* to *had*.
- The plural inflexion changes from *-ez* to *-es* e.g. *damagez/damages*.
- The change from <P> to <th> e.g. *Pat/that*.
- The change from *monoie* to *monay*.

#### Morphology

- The form of the personal pronoun of the second person singular *ye/you* is generalized, as well as the third person of the plural *they, them, their*.
- The reflexive *self/selves* are frequent.
- The adverbs never end in *-lich* (which was a form characteristic of the South).

(Fisher 1996:47,49)

The notion of standard began to be discussed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and was actively taken into account in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as the standardization at the level of writing, pronunciation and grammar was necessary (Freeborn 1998:224). As Leith (1983:33) indicates, the decision to establish a standard language also includes the involvement of an elite that is responsible for developing a variety that can be considered exclusive and which is imposed on population, trying to displace the rest of the other varieties.

Therefore, the standard language is not only a language for official affairs or that acts as a bridge for the communication between people who speak different dialects, but it is also a class dialect. Taking this into account, we can appreciate an evolution, because in the previous period we could see a clear dialectal division due to geographical reasons but now the dialectal division is also appreciated due to social factors, leading us to talk about sociolects i.e. “[d]ialects which identify where a person is in terms of social scale”(Crystal 2008:143).

It is somewhat clear that the written language is more likely to acquire a higher degree of uniformity than the spoken language, and this is one of the characteristics of a standard language.

Next, I will be explaining the process that led to the formation and recognition of the English Standard, but to do so, a distinction will be made between the written and oral standard.

### 3.2 WRITTEN STANDARD

The different phases of the process of standardization were already mentioned, but now an approximation will be made to each of them from the perspective of the English language in particular. Its process of standardization is characterised by having taken place in a prolonged way, resulting from a body of literary or religious texts and supported by official institutions.

Once the decision to create a standard language is made, the next step is to choose the variety that will be postulated as standard. We talk about this in the 15<sup>th</sup> century but in reality, the selection process of the English standard had already begun a century earlier and the way this choice was made responded to trends or prestige, since there was not yet an ideology of standardization at that time (Stein & Tieken-Boon van Ostade 1994:10).

Following this thought, it is important to remark that the English spoken in London had a lot of prestige because it was the language spoken by the educated people and a language belonging to the society of the dominant forces, both politically and commercially, and the centre of government (Freeborn 1998:225). When we speak of English spoken in London, we refer to the East Midland dialect. This dialect, which is associated with the merchant class is very important because it deals with the bases of the standard variety; in any case, there was also the dialect spoken by the lower classes that is in fact the antecedent of Cockney (which will be explained in detail in the following chapter). Thus, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century a written standard could be found that corresponded to this London dialect, although there was still a lot of variation in the writing which was later reduced with the introduction of the printing press, which contributed to unify the written language. The London dialect was not erected as the chosen one only for being the one spoken by the merchants, which in fact needed a long time to gain prestige, but also because of the triangle London, Oxford and Cambridge, that is, the capital city and the two existing universities. The centre of this triangle was the home of people who came from different areas of the British island to study at the different universities and they therefore spoke different dialects. In this manner, the dialect of East Midlands found itself driven to be used as a communication tool, as a lingua franca between the different people and it was also a medium of popular culture (folk-song) (Leith 1983:38-39). The East Midland dialect had been influenced by Old Norse (ON) since the region where it was spoken belonged to the Danelaw and therefore some of the characteristics it presents are the result of the influence of the Danish speakers who had settled there (Freeborn 1998:207).

At this moment, we are acquainted with the fact that it was possible to see in London the confluence of people coming from different areas of the country, as well as

from other parts of the world. For this reason, in the Early Modern English period we can see changes of the language associated with dialect levelling. This term (dialect levelling) refers to a process which occurs when there is contact between speakers of different dialects and there is a kind of consensus in which certain forms are maintained while the regional characteristics are eliminated (L. Wright 2012:692). Among the linguistic features of the dialect of London which suffered this levelling process, we can highlight:

- Southern present-tense indicative verb plural *-th* came to be replaced by Midland *-en* and *-s*. Subsequently, *-th* and *-n* were lost and zero became the Standard English marker, with *-s* still in use as a verb plural form in London English.
- Southern present-tense indicative verb third person singular *-th* was replaced by Northern *-s*.
- Present participle markers changed from regionally marked *-and(e)*, *-end(e)*, *-ind(e)* to non-regional *-ing*.
- Northern pronouns *they*, *them*, *their*, ousted *hie*, *hem*, *here*.

(L. Wright 2012:692)

We can see that there is the appearance of characteristics which are no longer associated with a specific geographical area, which sets this dialect in the path to become a supra-regional dialect, and this is one of the requirements that a standard variety must meet. In the epilogue of Caxton's *Earl Rivers* (1490) some of these characteristics can be observed and there are also forms that prevail in Present Day English (PDE).

before done / to seke ʒ execute y<sup>e</sup> werkes that myght be most acceptable to hym / And as fer as myn fraynes wold suffre me I rested in that wyll ʒ purpose Duryng that season I vnderstode the Jubylee ʒ pardonne to be at the holy Appostle Seynt James in Spayne whiche was the yere of grace a thousand CCCClxxiii. Thenne I determyned me to take that voyage ʒ shipped from Southampton in the moneth of Iuyll the said yere And so sayled from thens til I come into the Spaynyssh see there lackyng syght of all londes / the wynde beyng good and the weder fayr / Thenne for a recreacion ʒ a passyng of tyme I had delyte ʒ axed to rede somme good historye And among other ther was that season in my companye a worshipful gentylman called lowys de Bretaylles, whiche gretly delited hym in all vertuose ʒ honest thynges / that sayd to me / he hath there a book that he trusted I shuld lyke it right wele / and brought it to me / whyche book I had neuer seen before. and is called the saynges or dictis of the Philosophers.

Figure 2. EARL RIVER TEXT EXTRACT (Crotch 1978: 110)

In this text we can see the form *-ing* which is used as the marker of present participle in the words *lackyng*, *passyng*<sup>1</sup> in lines 8 and 9. For the construction of the past tense the inflection *-ed* is used in the same manner that in PDE serves to construct the past of regular verbs (*rested*, *shipped*, *called*, etc.). Furthermore, at this time, which is the end of Middle English, it is observed that the ending *-(e)s*<sup>2</sup> is used and preferred to the southern form *-en* as a plural marker i.e. *londes*, *saynges*, *Philosophers* in the lines 8, 15 and 16. Notice that the first person personal pronoun is already the PDE form *I* which appears throughout the whole text.

This variety had much support from great writers such as Chaucer and even from the crown (Henry V), furthermore it was also the variety chosen by Caxton to be used in his printings and all these helped its promotion and prestige. Then the language acquired new functions which previously were realized by other languages (French, Latin).

<sup>1</sup> The use of the grapheme <y> instead of <i> is due to the orthographic variation that existed at this moment.

<sup>2</sup> This is the form that was extended by analogy and became the productive way to construct the plural in Present Day English.

Moreover, there were writers in late Middle and Early Modern English who distinguished between good and bad ‘Englishes’ and who advocate for the use of the variety spoken in the South (London). These writers still exemplify the prevalence of regional differences that almost a century before Caxton presented in Prologue to *Eneydos* (1490).

our englysshe now vsid / And certaynly it was wreton in suche wyse that it was more lyke to dutche than englysshe; I coude not reduce ne brynge it to be vnderstonden / And certaynly our langage now vsed varyeth ferre from that whiche was vsed and spoken whan I was borne / For we englysshe men / ben borne vnder the domynacyon of the mone, whiche is neuer stedfaste / but euer wauerynge / wexyng one season / and waneth & dyscreaseth another season / And that comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from a nother. In so moche that in my dayes happened that certayn marchauntes were in a shippe in tamyse (*the river Thames*), for to haue sayled ouer the see into zelande (*Holland*) / and for lacke of wynde, thei taryed atte forlond (*Foreland*), and wente to lande for to refreshe them; And one of theym named sheffelde (*Sheffield*), a mercer, cam in-to an hows and exed for mete (*food*); and specyally he axyd after eggys; And the goode wyf answerde, that she coude speke no frenshe. And the marchaunt was angry, for he also coude speke no frenshe, but wolde haue hadde egges / and she vnderstode hym not / And thenne at laste a nother sayd that he wolde haue eyren / then the good wyf sayd that she vnderstod hym wel / Loo, what sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte, egges or eyren / certaynly it is harde to playse euery man / by cause of dyuersite & chaunge of langage... but in my Iudgemente / the comyn termes that be dayli vsed, ben lyghter (*easier*) to be vnderstode than the olde and auntyent englysshe /

Figure 3. ENEYDOS TEXT EXTRACT (Freeborn 1998:261)

Caxton shows his awareness of the variation at the level of lexis and morphology by expressing that people use words from different dialects when communicating and this leads to misunderstandings between the speakers. The example he exhibits is that of a merchant who comes from the north and asks in a tavern for *eggys* but the tavern woman does not understand him because for her the word that is used to refer to ‘eggs’ is *eyren*. With this pair of words we can also see the different ways that they used for the formation of plural: addition of *-s* in the north and *-en* in the south. And not only that but also shows temporal and regional variation in this text when saying “our langage now vsed varyeth ferre from that, whiche was vsed and spoken whan I was borne” and “And that comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from a nother”.

George Puttenham gives value judgements on which the best language is in his work *Of the Arte of English Poesie*, 1589. In this fragment he exposes how the southern dialect is better and more refined than the rest and for that reason he encourages people

to take the dialect of London as model because it is the most appropriate. The text also includes social differentiations between the gentlemen and the common people, with the former having the same dialect as those of the south, “speak[ing] [...] [and] writ[ing] as good Southerne as [they] of Middlesex or Surrey do, but not the common people” (from line 13 to 16) and in that way, he is linking the higher social class with that speech. Therefore, he establishes the consideration of the southern variety as the prestigious, and the northern one as lacking value since even though it was “the purer English Saxon” it was not as “Courtly nor so currant as [their] Southerne English”.

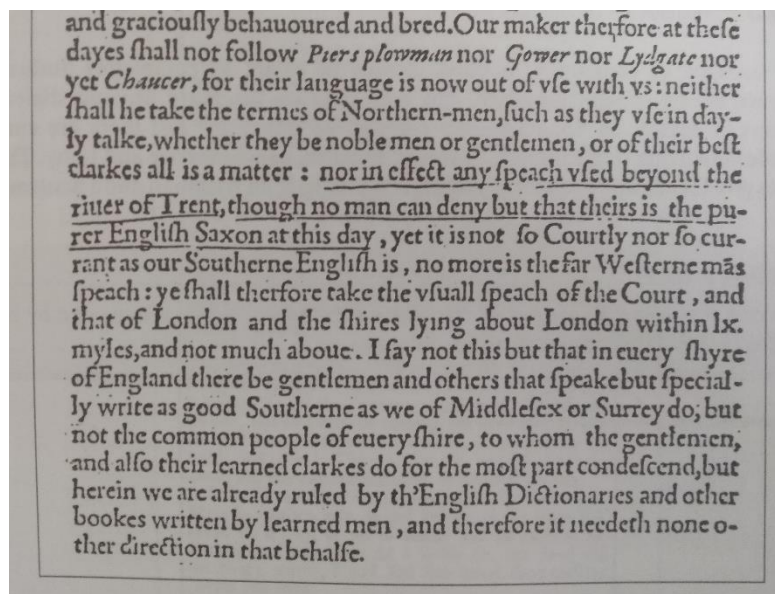


Figure 4. OF THE ARTE OF ENGLISH POESIE TEXT (Freeborn 1998:307)

The final step in the standardization process is codification, and its main function, as seen above, is to avoid variation and linguistic change. This phase is closely linked to the prescriptivism that is a current used as a tool to decide which variants should be chosen based sometimes on arbitrary arguments. It is used in the same way to classify different variants as correct or incorrect. Above all, this classification is also related to the fact that the attitudes one has towards a specific social group are associated and projected in the language they speak, that is why the codification of English was also used

as a way for certain social classes to mark a difference between them and the lower social classes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Leith 1983:49).

### 3.2 SPOKEN STANDARD

When speaking of standard, we do not only refer to the written language, because a standard for spoken English was also created, and it is known as RP (Received Pronunciation). This pronunciation was a marker of social class, status (and even now retains some associations with it). In fact, in many plays different pronunciations were used to define characters from different social classes. At first, in each area the regional dialect was spoken without any prejudice or social association attached to it. However, once the French language disappeared and English took its place in contexts such as the court and bureaucracy the social distinctions related to pronunciation began (Fisher 1996:146-147). As mentioned above, there were seen certain attitudes related to dialects which were not due to geographic differences but to social differences or prestige. Following this argument, we see that also in speech the dialect that seemed to be more prestigious was that of the south (as opposed to the north) and authors began to express that the English spoken in court and in London was the most correct, natural- the best (Fisher 1996:146).

Pronunciation was a tool used by the new social class, the bourgeoisie, to somehow fit into the upper social classes. Until this moment (18th century) one could not climb the social ladder because it was established by birth and inheritance, but now the important thing was the wealth that granted a better or social position (Fisher 1996:147).

In this period, as we have seen, there was already an established standard for writing but in speech it was more complicated to establish one since there were many regional differences. When speaking of the accent of London, it is the pronunciation, the



accent used by the members of the court and bureaucracy, that becomes prestigious. But although it was only an accent of social class, of the high bourgeoisie, at first it was associated with this social class only in the London region. Once its importance and influence had grown, the accent became a social prestige marker regardless of the geographical area, it goes beyond the surroundings of London (that is, it becomes supra-regional) (Fisher 1996: 150).

One of the institutions whose role was very important for the expansion and learning of RP was the different public schools from 1800. At the beginning education was for those who wanted to receive it, as something vocational, but later on it acquired a more relevant and a more serious role, when the bourgeoisie began to appear. In this way the schools had the responsibility to prepare people from different social backgrounds that would be part of the higher and / or relevant social classes, the gentry. A difference should be established between public schools and common ones. Public schools were in charge of training and educating the leaders, the people who would administer the expanding British Empire. But even the professors spoke in their own dialects since until that moment the education had been occupied by the teaching in Latin. In the end what ended up fixing the pronunciation was that of the students who, for the most part, spoke with the accent of London because they were children from aristocratic families (Fisher 1996: 147, 153-154). Another factor that reinforced the vision of this pronunciation as the adequate one was its use in broadcasting, since the presenters and announcers of the BBC were required to speak in RP. For this reason, there is an identification between RP and BBC pronunciation. It also counted with the support of the Church of England in such a way that even Anglican theological colleges offered elocution classes (Santipolo 2003:412-413).

Some distinctive features which constitute this accent are:

- Presence of long [ɑ:] before /f, f + consonant, s, s + consonant, θ, m + consonant, n + consonant/ in contrast with other varieties of English like American English in words like *after, dance, path*, etc.
- Lack of yod-dropping, that is, RP retains the pronunciation of [ɪ] or [j] in the diphthong [ɪu] present in the words *new, tune, suit*, etc.
- There is never h-dropping i.e. drop the letter <h> at the beginning of words.
- Presence of dark /ɫ/ represented as [ɮ], when appearing post-vocalic. This involves the raising of the tongue at the back of the mouth towards the velum as well as touching the alveolar ridge e.g. *ball, feel*, etc.
- This accent is not rhotic which means that [r] is not retained before consonants and at the end of words.

(Dekeyser & Scott 1977:37-67)

After reviewing the paths taken by the English language over the years, it is clear that extra-linguistic factors are the ones responsible for its trajectory. The different situations in which the language was involved were the result of the politics and social changes of the different periods (wars, monarchs, etc.). The language served as a way to construct the identity of its speakers as was the case of the use of English with the rise of nationalism or the use of RP to fit into the upper classes of society.

To conclude, I would like to highlight the fact that London is not only the origin of the standard variety of English, as discussed in this chapter, but also of other non-standard varieties. For this reason, the two following chapters aim to make an approximation to two nonstandard varieties of English that were spoken and are still spoken today in the city of London, Cockney and Multicultural London English. Not only will their history and characteristics be discussed, but also the factors that have been involved in their development throughout history.

## CHAPTER 4: NON-STANDARD VARIETIES: COCKNEY

Cockney is the term used to refer to the variety of English spoken in London by the working-class, and also to people who were from or lived in London, to be more precise those who lived in the East End area (Jacot 2018). The East End area of London comprises the area located east of the Roman and medieval walls of the City of London, and north of the River Thames. Traditionally it was the area located “within the sound of Bow Bells – [...] about a quarter of a mile of the church of St Mary-le-Bow in Cheapside in east central London and not far from London Bridge, Billingsgate fish-market and the Mansion House”(P. Wright 1981:11).

When searching for *cockney* in the *Old English Dictionary* (OED) there are two meanings of this word of great interest for us: First, it is “[t]he dialect or accent of the London cockney or of those from the East End of London generally” (OED). This definition fits with what was said above, but the second definition refers to “[...] one of the small or misshapen eggs occasionally laid by fowls, still popularly called in some parts ‘cocks’ eggs” (OED). One might think that these definitions have no relation, but the truth is that the term used to refer to the variety spoken by the workers has a negative connotation derived from this second meaning. Therefore, the English spoken by this social group of the London society was considered defective, of poor quality or, at least, of lesser value than the standard promoted and used by the social classes of higher rank (upper class, gentry, etc.). In words of Matthews (1972:xi) “Cockney is the most generally despised and downtrodden [of non-standard varieties of English]”. This author explains how Cockney has been a variety of English subjected to value judgments by intellectuals and whose dialect status was denied because it was considered no more than an erroneous and vulgar way of speaking. In fact, Matthews takes the words of Walker that appeared

in *Pronouncing Dictionary* (1791) to explain the vision that existed of this language (1972:xiii):

Cockneys [...] have the disadvantage of being more disgraced by their peculiarities than any other people. The grand difference between the metropolis and the provinces is that people of education in London are generally free from the vices of the vulgar; but the best-educated people in the provinces, if constantly resident there, are sure to be tinctured with the dialect of the country in which they live. Hence it is that the vulgar pronunciation of London, though not half so erroneous as that of Scotland, Ireland, or any of the provinces, is, to a person of correct taste, a thousand times more offensive and disgusting.

In this quotation it can be seen not only the reasons why Cockney was not considered worthy of being labelled as dialect / variety, but also the existing linguistic prejudices towards regional and non-standard varieties.

#### 4.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In order to know and understand better how Cockney arose and developed, it is necessary first to speak about and comprehend the conditions and the history of the place to which its emergence is attributed, the East End district. For this reason, this section will focus on the main events and circumstances that propitiated the necessary conditions for the development of Cockney.

Firstly, it is important to say that there has been a lot of debate when deciding the limits of the East End area, but according to Fox (2015: 6) when speaking of East End now we refer to the entire East and Northeast of the city of London including much of the urban area of Essex.

Around the 16<sup>th</sup> century the East End area was not very much urbanistic exploited, it served as an agricultural escape from the city. Already in that early period it was

possible to observe that there was a great ethnic diversity (Jewish, Italian, etc.). Until the 19th century there was no conception of the area as East End, and it was also in this century that the region underwent a great development, thanks to its industrialization and also to the construction of docks. The industrialization brought with it the appearance of factories of glue, sugar, etc. whose fumes were polluting and produced bad odours. For this reason, a bad image of the region of the east of London was created in opposition to the west, which was the place where the high classes mostly resided, even though some important and wealthy merchants, lawyers, doctors, etc. lived in the eastern area. There were different circumstances which caused the population to end up with a negative image of East End, as an area of violence and illness. In addition, during the beginning-middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were authors like Dickens who helped to build this negative image by using the East End region in their works portraying it as that of evil. In fact, an example of this dark construction of the East End is found in the description present in Dicken's novel *Oliver Twist* (Newland 2008:49):

The mud lay thick upon the stones, and a black mist hung over the streets; the rain fell sluggishly down, and everything felt cold and clammy to the touch. It seemed just the night when it befitted such a being as the Jew to be abroad. As he glided stealthily along, creeping beneath the shelter of the walls and doorways, the hideous old man seemed like some loathsome reptile, engendered in the slime and darkness through which he moved: crawling forth, by night, in search of some rich offal for a meal.

He kept on his course, through many winding and narrow ways, until he reached Bethnal Green; turning suddenly off to the left, he soon became involved in a maze of the mean and dirty streets which abound in that close and densely-populated quarter.

The negative image extended also to the speech. In fact, there are representations of the population of East End in literature as “homogeneous “them” – a mass of poor, uncivilised

creatures living in a space imaginatively projected far away from a civilised West End” (Newland 2008:52). In this way the idea of East End and the division between East and West was formed thanks to the descriptions taken from different works and authors (Newland 2008:37-54).

Due to industrialization and the constant migration flow of the city, the East End area had acquired a large number of residents. For this reason, there was an attempt to carry out a plan to alleviate the problems arising from overpopulation in this region (Fox 2015:9). However, between the years 1901 and 1989 the population of the municipality of Tower Hamlets (which constitutes the nucleus of East End) decreased drastically. The reasons for this massive exit of population were, in the first place, the two world wars which brought not only deaths but also the abandonment of the area by the population who searched for refuge and later on many of those who had left decided not to return to the area. As previously mentioned, the docks were of great importance for the population growth in this area in the 1800s. But during the 20<sup>th</sup> century their closure took place, and this was an event that triggered the departure of the population which had already begun before. This was the reason why many people had to leave their home after losing their livelihood and move further east, to find employment on the Thames docks in Essex which were still open (Fox 2015:9-12).

The Tower Hamlets district is one of the fastest socially, physically and economically changing district in Britain (Fox 2015:13-14). After the Second World War there were different ethnic groups in East End as many people from the former British colonies moved to London (Newland 2008:232-233). This area had always been a point of arrival for immigrants, as indicated by Fox (2015: 18), of which the Bangladeshi community stands out for its high number. Therefore, the area regained its population (after the great mass exodus), but it was no longer people who had previously lived in the

area and were therefore "traditional Cockneys", instead we find a global elite and a working-class of white immigrant. Other groups that also established their East End roots, as well as Bangladeshi, are the Irish, Huguenots and Jews (Fox 2015: 17-18). This fact is important because, as we already know, the history and culture of the community is intimately linked to the development and evolution of a language. In this way, many people left and settled in the suburbs of London, Essex and the surrounding area and it meant the expansion of the East End. Therefore Cockney is no longer associated with the area to which it was previously characterized but it became a dialect of a much wider Southeast region and not only related to a particular type of people (working class) because now East End has much more diversity (Fox 2015: 29).

#### 4.2 CHARACTERISTICS

Regarding the record of Cockney, during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, there was no great study on this variety of English beyond its representations found in the plays of the time. Even so, in these works there are no characteristics of the variety but a type to characterize people of low class and vulgar speech (Matthews 1972:1). It was not until the mid-eighteenth century that the vulgar variety spoken in London began to be studied as scholars began to take an interest in non-standard varieties (Matthews 1972:25). However, it is also important to bear in mind that Cockney, despite not being considered as an object of study and being excluded of most studies of varieties of English, had its role in shaping the Standard. As explained above, the speech of London took much importance after the Norman Conquest due to its prestige and economic activities. Therefore, the dialect of London served as the basis for the creation of the standard and when speaking of the dialect of London Cockney is also included because it was spoken by the working class (P. Wright 1981:12-13).

In the following subsections, I will try to give a brief explanation of the characteristics of this variety, as well as some examples.

#### 4.2.1 VOCABULARY

As far as its vocabulary is concerned, Cockney has words, from many languages in the world such as Dutch (*skipper*, *sketch*), Italian (*spaghetti*), Spanish (*potatoes*), Russian (*sputnik*), Arabic (*alkali*), German (*zinc*), etc. which are also found in the Standard variety. In addition, there are also words whose appearance is due to the technical language or to slang (P. Wright 1981:25).

It is also possible to find words related: i) with the historical dialect of the city of London as *dun* 'underpaid worker' or *greedy-guts* 'glutton'; ii) with the Jews e.g. *benkl* 'little stool', *schmerel* 'silly' or *shekels* 'coins' iii) to the Romani community like *lolly* 'money', *cock* 'friend', *dekko* 'a look around' etc. (P. Wright 1981:27-41)

In addition, the use of abbreviations is of great relevance for the Cockney: '*cos* 'because', '*kyoo* 'thank you', '*baccy* 'tabacco' etc. In the same manner, the speakers of this variety have their own expressions (P. Wright 1981:48-81):

- *it's like sleeping on a gravestone* 'very hard'
- *to come to Yorkshire* 'to cheat'
- *to do a Shevvild* 'to run away'
- *to Welsh* 'to refuse to pay'
- *to have been sent to Blackwall* 'having a black eye'

Finally, we can see the use of elements called space fillers in spontaneous conversation such as *ers / uns* and *yer see / ye know* (P. Wright 1981:57).



Cockney	Meaning	Cockney	Meaning
<i>ninny</i>	‘fool’	<i>scruffy</i>	‘tangle’
<i>boss-eyed</i>	‘cross-eyed’	<i>dead scared</i>	‘very frightened’
<i>‘umpty back</i>	‘hunch-backed’	<i>flap/bin</i>	‘pocket’
<i>beedle/binny</i>	‘large mallet’	<i>wee-uz</i>	‘wheels’
<i>faggot stoo</i>	‘stew’	<i>bangers</i>	‘sausages’
<i>pint/pig’s ear</i>	‘beer’	<i>frutty</i>	‘untidy’
<i>‘all</i>	‘front door’	<i>lumpers</i>	‘causal dock workers’
<i>ding-dong</i>	‘party’	<i>bomp on</i>	‘sing on’
<i>incomers</i>	‘new residents’	<i>moke</i>	‘donkey’

TABLE 1. GENERAL VOCABULARY (from P. Wright 1981:27-79)

The term *slang*, according to the *Oxford Dictionary*, s.v. “[a] type of language consisting of words and phrases that are regarded as very informal, are more common in speech than writing, and are typically restricted to a particular context or group of people.” In fact, slang is considered to be one of the characteristics of the vocabulary of Cockney. There are two types of slang, the so-called ordinary slang, which is the most common, and rhyming slang, which consists in replacing a word with a phrase whose last word rhymes with the original word (P. Wright 1981:84-85). Slang is difficult to understand if one is not familiar with it beforehand, and it also changes rapidly, terms disappear, and new ones emerge (P. Wright 1981:85).

According to Peter Wright (1981:87), there have been five sources of Cockney (ordinary) slang: boxing (there were many boxing combats in the different boroughs of London which helped the development and expansion of slang), the army, nautical language (although less than expected even though there were the docks), the language of thieves (since they had to have a different language to communicate and not be caught by the police) and American English (through movies). Some examples of the words acquired through these different sources are shown in the table below:

	Cockney	Meaning	Cockney	Meaning
Boxing	<i>bread-basket</i>	‘stomach’	<i>scrap</i>	‘fight’
	<i>kisser</i>	‘mouth’	<i>conk, snitch, boko</i>	‘nose’
	<i>pins</i>	‘legs’	<i>hammer, lick, paste, whack</i>	‘beating’
Army	<i>Blotto</i>	‘drunk’	<i>muck in</i>	‘to share’
	<i>buck shee</i>	‘free’	<i>scrounge</i>	‘to steal’
Nautical language	<i>swing the lead</i>	‘give a false impression’	<i>shove yer oar in</i>	‘interfere’
	<i>rope in</i>	‘to include, usually without consent’	<i>shove awf, sling yer ‘okk</i>	‘go away’
Thieves language	<i>Mick</i>	‘prison’	<i>Rum</i>	‘strange’
	<i>Nark</i>	‘spy’	<i>Save ‘is bacon</i>	‘escape’
	<i>Nick, lift, pinch</i>	‘steal’	<i>Chisel</i>	‘cheat’
America	<i>Bunk</i>	‘nonsense’	<i>Boy-friend, girl-friend</i>	‘sweethearts’
	<i>Wise-guy</i>	‘someone with a great opinion of himself’		

Table 2. ORDINARY SLANG (from P. Wright 1981:87-88)

On the other hand, rhyming slang has an extensive history in the city of London. There is no specific statement about its origin but hypotheses that relate this type of slang with certain groups such as beggars, thieves, masons or road workers. Its origin is estimated between the years 1800 and 1850, 1851 being the year in which it gained stability and it settled solidly. According to Peter Wright (1981: 95), "rhyming slang seems to have arisen chiefly from [language of thieves] and [gangs of Cockney navvies], namely navvies' language taken over by thieves." There were various sectors or, in other words, groups that played a role in the expansion of the rhyming slang and these were the world of entertainment and the London stage in 1900. In the same manner, the boxing fraternity helped to expand itself beyond its limits (P. Wright 1981: 94-96).

Rhyming slang was present in other parts of Britain besides London, just as it could be found beyond national borders in the USA or Australia. However, in London there is a large number of users of this type of slang and it is also believed that due to

events such as the Great War, London's rhyming slang expanded to other parts of the globe thanks to the army. In fact, this type of slang that was related to East End working-class people and criminals (the first who used it) has made its way through and it has become a slang employed by well-educated people residing in the suburbs and it is even represented in writing e.g. comics (P. Wright 1981: 96-97).

As far as prosody is concerned in rhyming slang, an orthodox example of this type has exclusively two stressed syllables, which can be accompanied by one or more unstressed syllables. In addition, paying now attention to semantics, the meaning of the expression changes when used in the slang terminology but there is usually a link with the literal meaning. There are some cases in which there is an obvious relation between the verb used in the expression and the implicit meaning of its meaning e.g. *bell ringers* 'fingers'; *tumble dahn the sink* 'drink'. However, even though this type of slang is called rhyming because the last word of the expression rhymes with the original word conveying the meaning, not all expressions rhyme and we find *Jack Jones* used for the word 'alone' and some other expressions reflect old pronunciations (P. Wright 1981: 98-99).

Some examples related to different semantic fields are:

Rhyming slang	Meaning	Rhyming slang	Meaning
<i>Pot o' jelly/ Auntie Nelly</i>	'belly'	<i>Have a laugh an' joke</i>	'smoke'
<i>Pig's ear</i>	'beer'	<i>Bees an' 'oney</i>	'money'
<i>Feas an' ants</i>	'pants'	<i>Gregory Peck, total wreck</i>	'cheque'
<i>Apples an' pears</i>	'stairs'	<i>Dolly mixtures</i>	'pictures, cinema'
<i>Dig in the grave</i>	'shave'	<i>Chips an' peas</i>	'knees'
<i>Cain an' Abel</i>	'table'	<i>Comic cuts</i>	'guts'
<i>Dickery dock</i>	'clock'	<i>Bristol Cities</i>	'breasts'
<i>Free blind mice</i>	'rice'	<i>Irish jig</i>	'wig'
<i>Trouble an' strife/ fork an' knife</i>	'wife'	<i>Whistle an' flute</i>	'suit'
<i>Tea leaves</i>	'thieves'	<i>Yorkshire blues</i>	'shoes'
<i>Grass' oppers 'copers</i>	'police'	<i>Steam-packet</i>	'jacket'

Table 3. RHYMING SLANG (from P. Wright 1981:100-106)

#### 4.2.2 PRONUNCIATION

This subsection intends to make an approximation to some characteristics of the pronunciation of Cockney speakers.

##### VOCALISM

First, I'll start by talking about the vowels and how they deviate from the Standard Received Pronunciation. The first vowel that is of interest is the short vowel /a/ that, from Middle English, has evolved towards an intermediate vowel between /a/ and /e/ in Cockney, or which is directly pronounced as an /e/ and this is a sound that has been characteristic of this variety. Some examples of this variation are the words: *bed men* (*bad man*), *keb*, *benk*, *strend* (*cab*, *bank*, *Strand*), among others. A large number of words that are written with the short vowel <u> have derived into a pronunciation which is similar to that of /a/ in Cockney, giving rise to words like *mad* (*mud*) and *blad* (*blood*). The short vowel /o/ before <f, s> gives rise to the pronunciation of an *aw*-sound. In the case of the long vowel /a:/ and the diphthong /ai/, the Cockney has a diphthong that looks more like the /ɪ/ sound rather than the actual diphthong /eɪ/. The long vowel /o:/ is pronounced as an *ow* instead of the Standard English diphthong. And finally, Cockney does not pronounce the diphthong / ju / in words like *suit*, it has rather the pronunciation of /ʊɪ/ whose written transcription is presented as <oo> (Peter Wright 1981:129-134).

ME	PDE		
	Standard English	Cockney	
a	æ	e	bad/man
u	ʌ	a	blood/mud
o	ɒ	aw	soft
a,ai	eɪ	ɪ	shape/paper
o	əʊ	ow	boat/coat
y	ju	ʊɪ	new/suit/duke

Table 4. VOWELS OF COCKNEY (P. Wright 1981:129-134)

## CONSONANTISM

The second part of this section focuses on the consonants and their characterization in this variety. Here, I have selected five features that I find interesting. The first one is h-dropping, that is, the omission of the / h / sound when pronouncing words like *heavy*, which becomes 'eavy. In addition, the use of dark /l/ is appreciated, that is, the pronunciation simultaneously of /l/ with a velar approximant sound which implies the rising of the tongue when pronouncing. But sometimes when Cockney speakers pronounce the dark l what is heard is like a sound of the vowel /u/ leading to the appearance of *schoo-u* (school) and *frai-u* (friar). The next one is the nasal sound /ŋ/ of <ng> that loses its velar characteristic in the pronunciation leaving the alveolar sound /n/. In addition, it may be the case that instead of the pronunciation of <ng> /ŋ/ we find / nk / as in *somefink*, *noffink* or *anyfink*. The unvoiced sound /θ/ of <th> is pronounced / f / e.g. *fanks* (thanks), *free* (three). Finally, one of the characteristics most shared by the different dialects of British cities is the glottal stop. It consists in the substitution of <ts, ks and ps> for breaks in the pronunciation of the sound rather than producing it as weak coughs. This occurs mostly between vowels and vowels and <l, r> in addition to often appearing at the end of the word (P. Wright 1981:134-138).

### 4.2.3 GRAMMAR

According to Peter Wright (1981:114), Cockney is often accused of not having a grammar, but we know that what it really means is that its grammar differs from that of the standard variety. Moreover, the grammar of the Cockney variety is thought to be bad, but such value judgments are not accepted since all languages and varieties are of equal value, whether they are standard or non-standard.

The grammar of Cockney differs from the standard mostly in the order of the words. For instance, when the speaker wants to emphasize something, the word in question will appear before the verb e.g.:

(1) *A ree-u* (real) *beauty it was; Fair dropped a clanger, e' did* (he made a great mistake).

You can also see redundancies like the use of *so derefore* or *but 'ahever* (however) both pairs together in a sentence or, to a greater extent, omissions of words i.e.

(2) *Tha' 'i, love* (Is that it, love)?

(P. Wright 1981:114-115).

Here follows a list of grammatical features organized according to part of speech:

1. Nouns: With respect to this word class, Cockney shows a large number of compound nouns e.g.:

(3) *know-all, bossy-boots, clever-britches*, etc.

In addition, it also has an ending that does not exist in the Standard English. This appears after *-st* and it consists on the existence of an additional vowel e.g.:

(4) *postes* (posts), *nesses* (nests) and *fistes* (fists).

Finally, words accompanied by numbers are not inflected for the plural:

(5) *four foot, three mile, six year since* (ago), etc.

(P. Wright 1981:115)

2. Pronouns: In relation to the personal pronouns, we can observe the use of the pronoun *me*, that is, the accusative form of the first person in subject function. By contrast, and due to hypercorrection (i.e. trying to reach a more elevated or

educated level of speech by modifying words or forms valid in the standard because they are thought to be incorrect), the form *me* is replaced by *I* when it is not necessary (6). Another feature is the use of first-person plural forms instead of the first-person of singular in requests, because it is considered as a "plural of modesty" (7). In addition, for the sake of emphasis, the subject pronoun is repeated in the objective case, as in (8):

(6) *Between you and I.*

(7) *Give us it.*

(8) *E's a right layabaht, 'im.*

It is also common to use the relative pronoun *what* instead of *who* / *which*:

(9) *Im what's talking* 'who's talking' / *a chap what I noo* 'who I knew'.

In relation to possessive pronouns ancient forms of East Midland dialects can be found such as *yourn* (yours), *hisn* (his), *hern* (hers), *ourn* (ours) and *theirn* (theirs). Finally, the indefinite pronouns differ from the standard in their pronunciation: *noffink*, *nuppm* (nothing); *somefink*, *suppm*, *summat* (literally somewhat - something) and *anyfink* (anything) (P. Wright 1981:115-116).

3. Verbs: One of the features of verb morphology is the levelling of the third person ending -s to all present forms e.g.:

(10) *They keeps stopping; I lives in Stepney.*

We can also find levelling in the opposite direction, that is a third singular pronoun followed the base form of the verb (11), and a personal pronoun singular is followed by a plural form of a verb (12).

(11) *The fellers is goin'; We was in'.*

(12) *As I were sayin.*

With regard to the formation and use of the Past, we can observe certain peculiarities. First, past participle forms are used to refer to finished actions, that is, instead of using the past tense i.e. I *done* it (I did it)/ He *seen* it (He saw it). In addition, Present Day English strong verbs, and therefore irregular verbs, are transformed into weak verbs by analogy e.g. *know-knowned*, *grow-growed*. You can also see the disappearance or omission of the final *-n* in past participles of strong verbs i.e. *break-broke-broke*, *speak-spoke-spoke* (P. Wright 1981:118-119).

4. Adverbs: There are many adverbs that do not change the adjective form and therefore do not add *-ly* at the end of the word (P. Wright 1981:121).
5. Adjectives: Occasionally there is the use of double comparatives e.g. *more uglier* (P. Wright 1981:121).
6. Conjunctions: The most remarkable change in this class is that of the conjunction *than* which is abbreviated to *an* or transformed into *nor* (P. Wright 1981:123):
7. Prepositions: There are several differences in relation to the standard such as the use of the form *awf of* instead of *off* (14). Another proposition we find in Cockney is *a*, which is derived from the old form *on*, preceding a verbal noun (15). There is confusion between *of* and *on* because both prepositions are abbreviated to *o'* (16). Lastly, sometimes the preposition *o'* (on) replaces *with* (17) (P. Wright 1981:124).

(14) get *awf of* the bus.

(15) it's *a-freeezin* (on-freezing)

(16) there was only two *on* (of) us.

(17) *It poured o'* (with) *rain*.



8. Exclamations: There are many different words to draw attention to someone like  
*Ah! Oi! Oo! Gawd! Love to duck! Stone the crows!* (P. Wright 1981:125).

#### 4.3 EXEMPLIFICATION OF COCKNEY

As we have seen, Cockney has been used as a means to represent types of characters in different works over the years, and the way it has been possible to study this variety was through works, since there have been few studies about it. In this way, I will now try to exemplify some of the features mentioned above with fragments of dialogues taken from a play written by George Bernard Shaw *Pygmalion* and the 1964 film based on it, *My Fair Lady*.

The play *Pygmalion* represents perfectly many of the characteristics of Cockney, a variety used by the character Eliza Doolittle. This woman is a street vendor of flowers characterized by her poor education and by belonging to the lower social class (working-class). In contrast the film presents Professor Higgins, a man with a high educational level and a good social position that uses RP. The film focuses on learning the pronunciation of RP and abandoning Cockney in order to turn Miss Doolittle into an aristocratic lady. Therefore, we can appreciate the social role of the RP accent, since its speakers are from the high society while the working class is associated with Cockney, a deficient/ poor pronunciation.

Some instances in which the features of this non-standard variety of London speech are observed are:

- (18) *Nah then, Freddy: look wh' y' gowin, deah.* (Shaw 1978:15)

‘Look where you are going, dear.’

- (19) *Tə-oo bunches of vovlets trod into the mad.* (Shaw 1978:15)

‘Two bunches of violets trod in the mud.’

- (20) *Ow, eez yə-ooa san is e? Wal, fewd dan y' də-ooty bawmz a mather should, eed now bettern to spawl a pore gel's flahrzn than ran awy athaht pyin. Will ye-oo py me f'them?* (Shaw 1978:16)

‘Oh, he's your son, is he? Well, if you'd have your duty by him as a mother should, you would not let him spoil a poor girl's flowers and then run away without paying.’

- (21) *Well, if you was a gentleman, you might ask me to sit down, I think.* (Shaw 1978:37)

‘Well, if you were a gentleman, you might ask me to sit down, I think.’

And now some examples taken from the movie:

- (22) 1:00:43 Just you *wait Henry Higgins* just you *wait*.

/dʒʌst ju: wait 'ɛnri 'iɡɪnz dʒʌst ju: wait/

- (23) 1:00:50 You'll be sorry. But your tears will be too *late*.

/ju:l bi: 'sɒri | bʌt jɔ: teəz wɪl bi: tu: laɪt/

- (24) 1:04:08 The *rain* in *Spain* stays *mainly* in the *plain*.

/ðə raɪn ɪn spaɪn staɪz 'maɪnli ɪn ðə plaɪn/

- (25) 1:05:26 In *Hartford, Hereford* and *Hampshire* hurricanes *hardly ever* happen.

/ɪn 'ɑ:tfəd, 'ɛrɪfəd ænd 'æmpʃɪə 'ʌrɪkənz 'hɑ:dli 'hɛvə 'æpən/

Some of the features that are depicted in the play and the film are h-dropping in words like *he* which becomes ‘e (example (20)) or the set of words with glottal fricative /h/ in example (25). It is also possible to see the pronunciation of /ow/ instead of /əʊ/ like in the word *going* (example (18)) which in Standard English would be pronounced /gəʊɪŋ/ but Shaw reflects in his play the pronunciation *gowin* in the same manner that he writes *də-ooty* to make the reader aware of the change from /ju/ in words such as *duty* (/ˈdju:ti/) to

the form <oo> in the written representation of Shaw and whose pronunciation would be /oʊ/. Moreover, there is the use of /a/ instead of /ʌ/ as in the word *mud* or *son* (examples (19),(20)) and /aɪ/ instead of /eɪ/ as in example (24). In the movie, Eliza also shows instances of th-fronting when saying:

(26) Well, if you were a gentleman, you might ask me to sit down, I *think*. She pronounces /fɪnk/ instead of /θɪnk/

Lastly, we can see the use of *was*, which is the third person singular form of the verb *be*, has been levelled to the second person singular in example (21).

## **CHAPTER 5: NON-STANDARD VARIETIES: MULTICULTURAL LONDON ENGLISH (MLE)**

This chapter continues with the study of a second nonstandard variety emerging in London known as Multicultural London English (henceforth MLE). I would like to start by clarifying certain concepts that will be of interest for the explanation and comment of this variety spoken in London and its surroundings.

Firstly, I would like to point out that when looking for the word *culture* in the *Oxford English Dictionary* we find, on the one hand, that this term encompasses any manifestation related to human intellect and creativity as well as those manifestations belonging to a refined environment. On the other hand, culture can also be understood as all those characteristics (e.g. customs, behaviours, ideas) that link a person to a specific social group or population. For this chapter, the definition that interests us the most is the second one because, when dealing with Multicultural London English, we are dealing with the different cultures (ethnic groups) that have been influential in the emergence of this variety of English and whose presence is reflected in its grammar, lexis or phonology. Therefore, the term multiculturalism, which is one of the words defining this variety gains great importance. Multiculturalism can be understood as i) the union and interaction of different cultures in the same society or ii) the existence of different cultures that make up the society of a region without them mixing with each other, like a puzzle in which the cultures are the different pieces (Block 2006:23-24). In the case of MLE we can see a mixture of both definitions because on the one hand there is a combination of the different cultures taking part in the construction of this variety, but on the other hand, each person will have/use more or less characteristics depending on which ethnic background he or she belongs to as a means of identifying with a social group or differentiate from another.

Throughout the chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation we have discussed and asserted that society has an important role in the development of a language and that both language and society (speakers) are tightly linked. This fact leads us to talk about the term community which refers to "any kind of recognizable collective identity" (Block 2006:24), but it can also be used for the situations in which a person has a feeling of belonging to a specific group, without this feeling being produced by geographic, ethnic relationships, etc. To be more specific, when we talk about a speech community, we refer to a "[...] regionally or socially definable human group which can be identified by the use of a shared spoken language or language variety" (Crystal 2008:446). The clarification of these concepts is important because many times, languages or varieties help different communities or social groups to establish their own identity through its use. Especially in cases where there is migration in between and a person arrives in an unknown environment feeling lost (Block 2006:24-26).

As in the case of Cockney, the socio-historical context is important for the understanding of Multicultural London English (MLE). Thus, I will try to establish the basis on which to understand what MLE is and how this variety of English has developed in the city of London.

## 5.1 EVOLUTION OF LONDON ENGLISH

It has been discussed in detail that London is a city which has suffered a constant flow of migration since early times. Being the capital of the British Empire has allowed this city to serve as a refuge and home to a diverse population of different ethnic and social backgrounds that came from the colonies (and other parts of the world) seeking a better life in the metropolis.

In chapter 4, we have already dealt with the history of one of London's regions, the East End, and for this chapter it is necessary to focus again in this area. Cockney is the variety associated with the working-class population who lived in the East End and it has given way through the years to what the media describe now as *Jafaican*, with people describing it as being "black English". *Jafaican* is the term used to refer to "youth language in multi-ethnic parts of London and beyond, [...] strongly associated with hip-hop [...]" (Cheshire et al 2011:152). This term is the most common to refer to MLE outside the linguistic circles and it carries a negative connotation since it is considered as a false Jamaican; in Goldbeck's words (2018: 11) "[m]edia portrayals of MLE using the word Jafaican are widely negative and entrenched in stereotypes of gang culture and the decline of society due to this perversion of English." Therefore, what was once the dialect of the working class of London has now become a multi-ethnolect. What the term ethnolect implies is that it is not a dialect that links people together because of their geographical location or social status but rather it is a variety that unites people belonging to the same ethnic group. In this case, the variety in question has characteristics of different ethnic groups and cultures and that's why is called 'multicultural'.

Moreover, the English spoken in the inner districts of London has undergone great changes in a short period of time (fifty years) and the speakers, especially young people, qualify the new variety on the rise as a slang instead of considering it a different dialect or variety (Cheshire et al 2013:63). The studies conducted to determine the causes that led to the emergence of this new variety of English are mainly focused on the speech of young people, in particular Cheshire, Fox et al (2013:64) mention a project that took place in Hackney, which is a municipality of London located northeast of the city, and which was also closely associated with the social networks - i.e. "[...] set of linguistic interactions that a speaker has with others"(Crystal 2008:325)- of the white working class

of the Cockneys. For this reason, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century we can observe the emergence of varieties in neighbourhoods characterized by the presence of multilingual population predominantly belonging to the working class (Cheshire et al 2013:63-65).

There were different factors involved in this transition from Cockney to MLE. The main one was immigration, since after the massive abandonment of the East End area after the two world wars, a large number of immigrants arrived and replaced the population that had left. At first, immigrants arrived from the West Indies area, but then people from many different countries appeared. Given these facts, two different situations occurred. First, the different ethnic groups interacted only within their own group, without mixing with each other or with the indigenous community (since there could also be rejection by the indigenous community). In this way, children who grew up in those regions maintained a bilingualism by differentiating the language used in their home (vernacular) and the language used in school, English, which was acquired only once they began their studies (learning the English of London). However, around the 1990s neighbourhoods were no longer segregated in relation to ethnic groups and there was greater contact between them. In this manner, there is a multicultural area housing diverse ethnic minority groups which have around 26 different mother tongues of the residents as well as the various Creoles spoken by immigrants from the Caribbean and African countries (Cheshire et al 2013:66-67).

In this way, we can affirm that the birth of MLE happens thanks to the contact between languages, but as Cheshire et al (2013:67-68) indicate, the fact that there are so many different communities of speakers makes it impossible to relate the emergency of MLE to a specific group or language. We do not have a learning situation through the parents, i.e. generational, but instead the speakers learn the language through the different social relationships (of friendship). As they are groups with a lot of ethnic diversity, new

speakers acquire an English with great linguistic diversity and that differs from the standard. Already at home there are different kinds of English as the families are most likely immigrants who will probably speak some kind of postcolonial variety of English.

## 5.2 CHARACTERISTICS

London is a key point for the emergence of innovations related to the English language. This section will therefore try to exemplify some of the characteristics found in inner-London that make up the MLE variety (Fox et al 2011:93). Some of these characteristics are also present in other non-standard varieties of English and not only that but they are distinctive traits of adolescent speech. The use of language of young speakers is very important because they are the ones that tend to bring linguistic changes and introduce innovations in speech (Palacios 2011:106).

### 5.2.1 VOCABULARY

The vocabulary of MLE, like many other non-standard varieties of English, has many specific words, linked to the culture, tradition and social background of its speakers. In the first place, when the lexicon of this variety is analysed, loans from other languages or sociolects can be observed (like Jamaican or Afro-Caribbean English, with Hackney's population being largely descendants of these ethnic communities) (Palacios 2018:372):

- *Skeen* 'Ok, fine', *wah gwam* 'what is going on?', *sket/skettle* 'loose woman and short for Caribbean *sketel* meaning 'slut', *yute* 'kid from youth', *batty* 'homosexual', *creps* 'trainers', *ackee* 'national Jamaican fruit', etc.

Furthermore, it is common to find abbreviated words (especially in the language of adolescents) as *cos* 'because', *totes* 'totally', *broth/bruv* and *blud, blad, blood* 'brother', *fam* 'family', etc. (Palacios 2018:376-377).



Finally, there are words that invert their meaning, i.e. if they had a positive meaning, they become negative or vice versa e.g. *wicked*, *sick* mean ‘good’ or ‘great’, *beef* meaning ‘trouble’. Likewise, there are words that mean the same thing and compete for their survival in the vocabulary of the speakers e.g. *drugged*, *mashed*, *pissed*, *stoned* meaning ‘to be high on drugs or heavily drunk’. Something related to juvenile speech is the transformation of meanings of words to turn them into metaphors or metonymic images like *turf*, *ends* and *yard* meaning ‘the area or district of a speaker’ (Palacios 2018:381).

### 5.2.2 PHONOLOGY

With respect to the pronunciation of this variety, we see that there are changes in the vowel system, especially in relation to diphthongs. The variety that existed in the region where the MLE now extends was the Cockney and we see that the prevailing diphthongs of this variety now change: [æɪ] → [eɪ] and [ʌʊ] → [oʊ]. Besides, in relation to what is known as GOAT fronting, which is widely spread in southeast varieties resulting in the use of [əʏ], in MLE speakers usually rise and back this vowel. (Kerswill 2014:433). Cheshire et al. (2011:163) also mention the GOOSE fronting as one characteristic of MLE. This implies the change of pronunciation from the back vowel [u:] to a more centralized one [ɤ:]. There is a relation of this pronunciation with the speakers which are non-Anglos.

When discussing the phonological characteristics of Cockney in the previous chapter, we said that one of them was h-dropping, but now MLE reinstates the / h / sound in lexical words and stressed pronouns (Kerswill 2014:433).

### 5.2.3 GRAMMAR AND DISCOURSE

The first salient grammatical characteristic would be related to what is known as quotatives i.e. a device to mark quoted speech. In Standard English, the common way of introducing indirect speech is through the verbs *say*, *count*, *ask*, etc. but in MLE there is another form which consists of the expression *this is* + speaker. This is mostly associated with the language of the teenagers (Cheshire et al. 2013:70). Some examples of this new quotative would be (Cheshire et al. 2011:172):

(27) *This is them* “what area are you from. what part?”

(28) *This is me* “don’t lie. if I search you and if I find one I’ll kick your arse”

(29) *This is my mum* “what are you doing? I was in the queue before you”

In relation to the personal pronouns, the word *man*, that in standard English stands for the noun referring to a male human, underwent a process of grammaticalization (i.e. a lexical form transforms into a grammatical one) and it is used as a first person singular or plural pronoun and as the second person plural; as well as it can even represent the generalized form *you* (Cheshire et al. 2013:69-70). An example of this type would be (Cheshire et al. 2017:3):

(30) I don’t care what my girl looks like it’s her personality *man*’s looking at  
(I’m looking at).

In addition, it is observed that while in other varieties the relative pronoun *who* is in decreases in frequency and is replaced by the relative pronoun *that*, in MLE this does not happen. In fact, *who* continues to be used with great frequency and it also serves as an indicator to recognise the preceding noun as the general topic of discourse. Therefore, we see that *who* has acquired a discourse function in this variety e.g. (Cheshire et al. 2017:3):

(31) She’s the woman *who* bought my house.

Negation in this variety can be constructed with the invariable form *ain't* (which is also characteristic of other non-standard varieties such as Barbadian Creole (Bajan), Guyanese Creole (Creolese), Bahamian English or Urban African American Vernacular English according to the eWAVE). It is used to form the negative of the verbs *be* and *have*. In standard English it is not usual to see the presence of more than one negator in a sentence, but in MLE and other non-standard varieties of English both of the British Islands and around the world, it is very common to see:

(32) I *didn't* see *nobody*.

This is what is called negative concord or double negation and, as Palacios (2013:222) explains, it is “the presence of two or more negatives in the same clause which do not cancel each other out”. Another commonly used feature is the use of the adverb *never* to construct the negation in a specific point of the past as opposed to its characteristic form of universal temporal negation: simple past verb + *never* which is seen as an equivalence to *didn't* (Palacios 2013:213-222).

Alluding to pragmatic markers, the form *innit* “functions as an invariant question tag to check comprehension or to keep the interlocutors’ attention, although on many occasions it [...] adopt[s] other discourse values” (Palacios 2013:217). This construction is known as invariant question tag and it is characterized by its lack of agreement with the subject of the main sentence as the standard form would do e.g. (Palacios 2013:217-218):

(33) He is coming, isn't he? You like it, don't you? Instead in MLE we find:  
He is coming, *innit*?; You like it, *innit*?

Lastly, in relation to verbal forms, there are two cases of levelling related to the verb *be*. For the construction of the past tense forms, in the standard *was* is used with

singular first and third person subjects and the form *were* is used for the second person singular subjects and with all the plural subjects. However, there is a two-pattern levelling situation which involves the use of *was* extended to the whole past tense paradigm or, on the other hand, we could find the use of *was* in positive contexts and *were* in negative (Cheshire et al. 2011:181-182). Some examples of this are:

(34) We was *wasn't* we?; I was *wasn't* I?

(35) We was *weren't* we?; I was, *weren't* I?

(Cheshire et al. 2011:181)

### 5.3 ILUSTRATION

In the case of Multicultural London English, for the examples of this variety I have chosen to search in the multimedia media, and I have collected examples from a movie and a television series.

*Kingsman: The secret service* is a film which takes the viewer to the city of London in 2014. In this movie we can see the change from Cockney to MLE but also of the coexistence of these two varieties. The main character is a boy named Eggsy who is characterized as a chav, which is a pejorative term to refer to a marginal adolescent boy (young adult) with a characteristic dress style (tracksuit) and which usually comes from a working-class background. In the film I chose to highlight a display of a mixture between MLE and Cockney features:

(36) 12:34 We'll show your mother how *three* can be good company

/ wi:lʃəʊ jə: 'mʌðə haʊ fri: kæn bi: gʊd 'kʌmpəni/

(37) 13:21 Are you mental *cuz*?

(38) 13:27 *Oi!* You *think* you can chat shit about us and we will not do *nothing*

/ɔɪ! ju: fɪŋk ju: kæn ʃæt ʃɪt ə'baʊt ʌs ænd wi: wɪl nɒt du: 'nʌfɪŋ/

(39) 14:03 You jacked his fucking car keys *bruv*?

Yeah now we're *gonna nick* his car

(40) 18:14 That *ain't* an answer

(41) 18:28 So before you were a tailor *was you* in the army?

(42) 19:13 Oh, you think there's a lot of jobs going around *here*, do you?

/əʊ, ju: θɪŋk ðeəz ə lɒt ɒv dʒɒbz 'gəʊɪŋ ə 'raʊnd ɪə, du: ju: /

(43) 19:50 And if *we was* born with the same silver spoon up our *arses* we'd do  
just as well as you ... if not better

(44) 19:55 What the fuck you doing *here*?

/wɒt ðə fʌk ju: 'du(:)ɪŋ ɪə /

(45) You *taking the piss*?

(46) 18:30 You should get out of the way, Grandad, or you'll get *hurt* and all

/ju: ʃʊd get aʊt ɒv ðə weɪ, 'grændæd, ɔ: ju:l get ɜ:t ænd ɔ:l /

In these examples we can see the depiction of characteristics of MLE such as fronting when saying /frɪ/ instead of /θrɪ/, /fɪŋk/ instead of /θɪŋk/ or /nʌfɪŋ/ instead of /nʌθɪŋ/ (examples (36) and (38)). Furthermore, with respect to the vocabulary we can see that there are specific terms as in the examples (37) and (39) the words *cuz* and *bruv* which are used to refer to brother or the use of slang words like *arse* or the phrase *taking the piss* which means make fun of somebody (examples (43) and (45)). In the speech of these characters the use of abbreviations like *gonna* ('going to') in (39) is also found. Finally, regarding to grammar, we can see two deviations from the standard i) the construction of negation through the form *ain't* and ii) the use of *was* with the second person singular and first-person plural (examples (40), (41) and (43) respectively).

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, in this film we still see remnants of Cockney as the h-dropping in words like *here* or *hurt*, but some characters no longer

exhibit this characteristic. For instance, Eggsy, the protagonist, only presents h-dropping in certain words but in most of his interventions he recovers the /h/. Moreover, the word *nick* appears in the example (39) meaning ‘to rob’ and this is a word which belongs to the slang of Cockney that specifically comes from the language of thieves. Lastly the exclamation *Oi!* is also a typical exclamation to capture the attention of the speaker / listener in a conversation used by the Cockney speakers.

My second example of MLE comes from *Chewing Gum*, a British series broadcasted between the years 2016 and 2017. In this show, a multi-ethnic community is depicted with people in their twenties as main characters. Some MLE features are:

Episode 1:

(47) 5:02 I *ain* ’t even upset. I’m proud

(48) 5:34 Well, *thank* God for the NHS, then *innit*?

/wəl | fæŋk ɡɒd fɔː ði ɛn-ɛɪf-es, ðɛn/

(49) 5:48 Yeah, it’s good when it’s good but it’s never exciting, like never a *thrill*.

/jeə, ɪts ɡʊd wen ɪts ɡʊd bʌt ɪts ’nevər ɪk’saɪtɪŋ, laɪk ’nevər ə frɪl/

Episode 2:

(50) 3:05 What a prat. Why is she *man jacking* baby food?

(51) 7:18 Look, *it don* ’t matter.

(52) 12:04 What’s your point *fam*?

(53) 17:21 You got your period ’*cause* your period was fucking due, *bruv*!

Episode 3:

(54) 4:13 I mean ’*cause* I do not know if I can go back you know?

(55) 11:17 He's gangster, he's got tattoos all over his face, *blad*.

In the different episodes of Chewing Gum we can see features of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar which have been identified as characteristics of MLE. First regarding pronunciation there is a generalized use of th-fronting by the different speakers (/θ/ → /f/) reflected in the examples (48) and (49). Grammatically, the invariable form of negation *ain't* is used (47) and also the form *don't* (corresponding to the set of first and second person singular and the set of plural forms) is used with the third person singular in example (51). In addition, the question tag invariable *innit* appears and we can also see the word *man* which has an emphatic role functioning as a third person pronoun (examples (48) and (50) respectively). Finally, in relation to the vocabulary there are different ways to refer to brother: *bruv*, *blad*; abbreviations as *cause* and specific words of slang such as *jacking* ('stealing') or *fam* ('friend').

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION**

The study on the history of London, the standard language and the different non-standard varieties covered in this dissertation demonstrates the great importance and impact that the society and the different changes of the British capital had in the evolution of the English language.

London has been a centre of migration since its very beginning when it was first founded in Roman times and its population has grown exponentially over the centuries housing people from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds. The importance of the British capital grew due to its economic development as a vital point of trade for the island and the rest of the world. Besides, near London we find the enclave of the oldest and most prestigious universities in the country. Its role as the cradle of the monarchy harbouring the court has brought to this city a status of prestige clearly reflected in the language and the conceptions of its inhabitants by the rest of the population. But London being not only the capital of the country but also of the different colonies acquired by the Empire throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, turned into a metropolis. It was the metropolis whose economic prestige resulted in the massive migration of people both within the British island and from different parts of the world emerging, in this way, a cosmopolitan and multicultural society. It is often characterized as a "melting pot", and it is because of this mixture of different races, cultures and traditions that we can see the variation and the differences of the English language throughout the different years.

Linguistic variation in the English of London has been present at all levels since its first manifestations. One of the most important factors has been the constant flow of migration and political changes, in form of invasions, suffered by the British country that had an impact on the development and evolution of English. It is quite clear that the environment in which this language has been established has always been an environment



of linguistic contact, from Old English paired with Old Norse through Middle English and French until the more recent connections with the Creoles of the Caribbean, Spanish, Italian, Bangladesh, etc. All through its history English had its moments of peak and decline. But the Norman Conquest conforms itself as one of the most important events that happened in the island due to the darkness that brought to the English language. There are many extralinguistic factors that can influence the destiny of a language but one of the most important is the attitude of the community, the speakers, towards their language. In the case of English, the nationalism that emerged in Britain was of great help for the resurgence of this language. The attempt to create a sense of nation, pride and unite the population against the presence of the 'foreigner element' (in particular the French) led to the use of English as a means to construct the English identity.

The Standardization process was carried out as a solution for the immense variation that existed in the English language and as a way of constituting a variety which served for the functions that were occupied by other languages (French and Latin) before. The variety that is considered the basis of the current standard corresponds to the one spoken in London in the Late Middle and Early Modern English periods. This variety was chosen because it was the result of mixing dialects and languages as London was a great shelter for people from different areas of Great Britain and from other countries. Therefore, it emerges as a kind of lingua franca in order to make it possible for the different people living in the capital to understand each other. We can see that there is a progression in the language of London, which first belonged to one of the four original regional dialects, through the years. It turned into a sociolect marking social class differences of its speakers when becoming the language of the merchants, the court and the aristocracy.

However, London has not only been a central piece for the emergence of the English standard but also for the appearance of non-standard varieties. Its population enriched with inhabitants coming from different parts of the world has been crucial in this process of change and evolution. At the same time as the standard was being shaped, there was also another variety of London English emerging called Cockney. For most of the people it was a badly spoken and imperfect English used by the working class living in the East End. This area suffered a massive abandonment of inhabitants that later resulted in its repopulation by immigrants. The multiculturalism of this municipality of London was crucial and it was reflected in the language used by its inhabitants. The English spoken by these different ethnic communities had changed, especially in the vocabulary. But not only did a specific vocabulary linked to this variety exist, but it also had a large amount of slang that is considered one of its main characteristics.

Over the years and the development of the districts of London, a differentiation between the east and west of the city has been established, mainly due to their social prestige and the prejudices that arose towards the eastern area of London, prejudices that have been attached to the speech of its inhabitants. Nowadays what is heard across the city of London is the variety known as Multicultural London English which carries great negative connotations. The innovations of this variety are usually attributed to the youth, the teenagers who transmit these changes through contact mainly in their friendship circles. Moreover, this non-standard variety of London English is now considered an ethnolect, to be more precise multi-ethnolect, providing cultural manifestations of its different speakers in its grammar, phonology and lexis.

When studying these three varieties of English it can be observed that we are dealing with a continuous process of change and evolution of a language and we are witnesses of this process due to the characteristics of the language. They act as a

palimpsest, representing its history by linking different features to the past of that language. Although there is the standard language which is a somewhat more fixed variety and which does not exhibit as much variation, languages are living entities and they do not stop changing, and actually the fact that their speakers use them for daily communication increases the chances of change. The greater contact and exposure to other cultures and languages favours the influence of some over others (something that has been happening for centuries), but also the innovations made by different social groups are of great importance. Thus, to this day one of the most important sources of linguistic innovation is the speech of the adolescents who are great responsible for the evolution of MLE.

The topics addressed in this dissertation are extensive enough to make a detailed study of each one of them by itself. For this reason, it would be possible to deepen in the topics of each of the chapters presented here. For me, writing this dissertation has meant a process of immersion in databases, books and articles that I had never handled before. It has helped me to improve my skills when doing a search focused on specific elements and go deeper to reach the core information. And not only that, but I have also been able to understand better the reasons behind different linguistic situations present today. In essence, this work has awakened the critical and analytical spirit that now allows me to analyse and focus on the characteristics of the varieties of English and not to rush into value judgments when talking about non-standard varieties.

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